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READING "THE U-2 AFFAIR"

A few words of warning are here with presented for those who are reading 'The U-2 Affair' as it appears serially in this newspaper. The warning also holds for those who may be reading the book which was published a month or so ago and written by David Wise and Thomas B. Ross, both of whom are reputable newspaper reporters.

This is not a story of a fabulously successful spy airplane, but rather an account of the U-2 failure in what may have been its last mission over Russia. Thus the book details the Francis Gary Powers trip over Russia, the crash of the airplane, the confusion in Washington, the break-up of the 1960 summit conference in Paris, the trial of Powers by the Russians for espionage, and finally the trade which brought Powers back to the United States in exchange for Rudolph Abel, the Russian spy who had been operating much less dramatically within the United States.

By concentrating the story on the above-mentioned details, the authors do a disservice to the U-2, its sponsors, and particularly the Central Intelligence Agency. No one will or can ever tell the story of the U-2 successes. Unfortunately, "The U-2 Affair" represents about all that ever will be written on the subject. Since the motif is failure, there is very little opportunity to work in details of success. There would never have been a book if the spy plane hadn't cracked up over Russia. Nowhere in the book is there a listing of the successful flights, although by the time Powers made his last trip in May of 1960, the flights were called milk runs because they had become so routine.

Regardless of what the authors of "The U-2 Affair" say about the breaking up of the Paris conference of the Big Four after the Powers' crash and Khrushchev's description of the espionage mission, the fact remains that for a period of years prior there had been conferences, even as the airplane was gathering photographic evidence.

military effort. Furthermore, there had been flights, many of them by the RB-46's, an airplane of considerably less capabilities. This second airplane never was able to go very far over Russia for lack of proper range. However, the Russians knew for a long time what the RB-46's were doing, and there had been successful retaliation, including the capture of some of the fliers. The flights of the RB-46's never interfered with summit conferences.

So let no one think for a moment that over-flights were something that had only been discovered when Powers came crashing down. Sure, Khrushchev broke up the Paris conference over the U-2 flight. He acknowledged, however, that he knew about the U-2 back in September of the year before, but decided not to bring the subject up when he was at Camp David with President Eisenhower. He merely decided in May of 1960 to pull the plug on the summit meeting, and the U-2 was the most dramatic reason.

Admittedly, there was fumbling on the part of Washington in acknowledging that the over-flights were taking place. Spying when discovered never is susceptible to the proper kind of an explanation. It is interesting that never once did anybody from Russia, including Khrushchev himself, acknowledge the existence of Rudolph Abel, who presumably did a pretty adequate job of spying in America. At least, it was a job that was of such importance that when there came an opportunity to get their man back home, they decided that he was of greater value in Russia than he was in the Atlanta penitentiary.

"The U-2 Affair" is an interesting and intriguing series of articles from a worthwhile book. The foregoing is presented in the interest of giving the readers a chance to balance themselves.